

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

you such an ardour of charity as will not let you hear the voices of those incarnate demons, nor follow the counsel of those perverse counsellors founded in self-love, who, as I understand, are trying to frighten you and so prevent your coming, by saying that you will be slain. And I tell you in the name of Christ crucified, sweetest and most holy Father, that you have absolutely no cause for fear. Come with confidence ; trust in Christ sweet Jesus ; for, if you do what you ought, God will be with you and there will be no one against you. Up, manfully, Father ! For I tell you, you have no need to fear. If you did not do what you are bound to do, you would have need to fear. You are bound to come : come then ! Come, sweetly, without any fear. And if any of your household strive to impede you, say to them boldly what Christ said to Peter, when, through tenderness, he sought to draw Him back from going to His passion : *Get thee behind me^ Satan : thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*"¹

The beautiful prayer that Catherine offered on this occasion was taken down by Tommaso Petra, an Italian protonotary attached to the papal court, who became one of her disciples, and was afterwards secretary to Gregory's successor, and has thus been preserved to us. "O supreme and ineffable Deity," she prayed at the end, " I have sinned and am not worthy to pray to Thee, but Thou hast power to make me worthy; punish my sins, O Lord, and consider not my miseries. I have one body, which I offer up to Thee; here is my flesh, here is my blood ; let my veins be emptied, my body destroyed, my bones scattered, for those for whom I pray to Thee ; if it is Thy will, let all my frame be ground up for Thy vicar upon earth, the bridegroom of Thy Spouse, for whom I pray Thee to deign to hear me, that he, Thy vicar, may consider Thy will, may love and fulfil it, so that we may not perish. Give him a new heart, that he may

¹ Letter 233 (8). She had previously written to him : "God has given you authority and you have taken it: you are bound to use your strength and power ; and, if you do not wish to use it, it would be more to God's honour and your soul's salvation to resign what you have taken." Letter 255 (13) ; Harleian MS.